

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore.

The Republican leader is recognized.

HEALTH CARE WEEK X, DAY III

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, Senators are still hashing out the details of the Democrat health care proposal that they plan to bring to the floor, and it isn't getting any better.

Americans wanted us to work together on reforms that improve the system we have. What they are getting instead is a bill that creates an entirely different system in which government plays a bigger and bigger role in people's health care decisions. They are slapping this plan together as quickly as possible, and then they are going to force it on the American people whether they like it or not. That is what is going on this week in the hearing room of the Finance Committee.

Supporters of this bill are watching the clock. They know the longer it sits out there, the more Americans will oppose this trillion-dollar experiment that cuts Medicare, raises taxes, and threatens the health care choices that millions of Americans now enjoy. That is why they struck down a commonsense amendment this week that would have given the American people 72 hours to look at the details of this legislation.

They are rushing it through, hoping no one gets to see the fine print. Why else would they deny this 72-hour amendment that gives people the time they need to read a 1,000-page bill? Why else would they be dismissing anyone who raises a peep of opposition? Why else would they be asking people to forward fishy e-mails to the White House? And why else would the administration order an investigation into a private company for telling its clients the truth about what this legislation would mean for them?

More and more, it seem like supporters of this legislation just don't believe that the American people know what is best for themselves, so they want to keep them in the dark about the details. But that is not the way democracy works. And that is why Republicans sent a letter to the Department of Health and Human Services yesterday calling on the HHS Secretary to rescind the gag order that it placed on companies that want to tell seniors how health care legislation will affect them. Seniors deserve to know what is in this bill, and insurers should be free to tell them.

But until that gag rule is lifted, we will tell seniors ourselves, because it hits them hard. It cuts services that millions of seniors currently enjoy. It could force seniors off the plans they

have with nearly \$140 billion in cuts to one popular Medicare plan; it calls for nearly \$120 billion in Medicare cuts for hospitals that care for seniors; more than \$40 billion in cuts to home health agencies; and nearly \$8 billion in cuts to hospice care.

Everyone agrees Medicare needs reform. This isn't reform. Lawmakers want to use Medicare as a piggy bank to pay for their experiment, and seniors are going to suffer for it. The response we keep getting from the administration is that hundreds of billions of dollars in cuts to Medicare won't affect services. Who can blame seniors for scratching their heads over that one? How do you cut half a trillion dollars from something without anybody noticing the difference? Seniors, rightly, just aren't buying it.

Americans want reform. They want lower costs. They want greater access for people without insurance. And they want Congress to deliver commonsense solutions to all these problems. What they are getting instead is a trillion-dollar experiment that cuts Medicare, raises taxes, and threatens the health care options that millions of Americans now enjoy. And they are being told it all has to be done as fast as possible to meet some artificial deadline that no one can explain.

Americans want us to slow down, and Congress is putting its foot on the accelerator. Americans want to know what this bill would mean for them, and Congress won't let them read it before a vote, won't even allow them 72 hours to look over the details of a 1,000 page piece of legislation that will affect one of the most significant aspects of their lives. Americans have concerns about what they're hearing, and they are being told to shut up, sit down, and take the health care we give you.

This is precisely the kind of condescending attitude from lawmakers in Washington that ordinary Americans are tired of. This is the kind of thing they are protesting and speaking out against across the country. And over the last few months, Congress hasn't given them any reason to believe that their concerns aren't exactly right.

I yield the floor.

Mr. COCHRAN. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. INOUE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. INOUE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. INOUE. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

FAA REAUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, last evening the Senate passed a 3-month extension—until December 31—of the Federal Aviation Administration reauthorization bill, and I wanted to mention a word about that.

The 3-month extension is necessary because the authorization ends at the end of this month, September 30. This is such an important issue, so I hope we are able to find time on the floor of the Senate—I have talked to the majority leader, Senator REID, about finding time on the floor to consider the FAA reauthorization bill, which includes important provisions to modernize our air traffic control system.

Let me talk about the process for getting a bill considered on the floor just for a moment. It has been difficult here to get things done on the floor of the Senate. Sometimes we have had cooperation, sometimes not. Sometimes on very noncontroversial things we have had to file cloture just on the motion to proceed. It takes 2 days to get cloture, have a vote on cloture, and then the minority has insisted on 30 hours postcloture. So you have to take the better part of a week just to get to a piece of legislation, even the noncontroversial ones. So my hope would be that perhaps we could get more cooperation particularly when it comes to passing the FAA Reauthorization Act.

The FAA Reauthorization Act is critically important because we need to modernize the air traffic control system. I chair the Aviation Subcommittee, and that is why I wish to bring this bill to the floor, along with my colleague, Senator ROCKEFELLER, and move rather rapidly on the issue of modernization of the air traffic control system.

We are still flying using ground-based radar systems that have been around for a long time. Previously, I described on the floor of the Senate that when flying began in this country and we started to haul mail by airplanes, planes could only fly during the day when the pilot could see. Then eventually they began flying at night by building big bonfires 50 or 100 miles out so the pilot could see the direction they were supposed to head. Then, with more sophistication, we developed ground-based radar and we put transponders in an airplane which send signals to a radar on the ground, and that radar then puts a little signal on a